

DID YOU KNOW?

UNC Approves Undergraduate Completion Plan

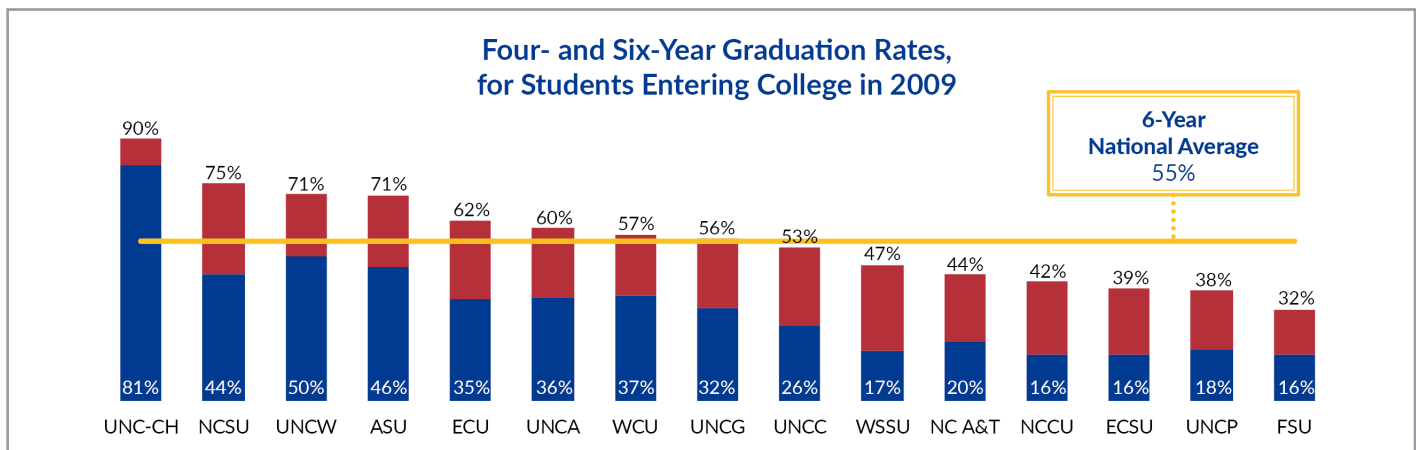
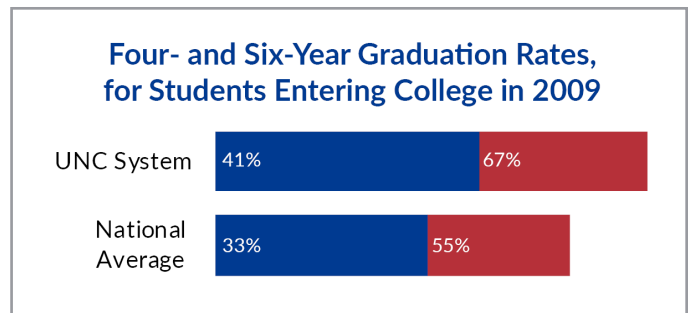
Did You Know that the University of North Carolina (UNC) Board of Governors unanimously approved the system's [Undergraduate Degree Completion Plan](#) in December 2016?

In response to [House Bill 1030](#), the plan requires each UNC constituent institution to implement a series of targeted student success strategies with the goal of reducing student time-to-degree and increasing system-wide graduation rates. The plan is set to go into effect during the 2017-18 academic year.

Time-to-Degree and Its Impact on Student Debt

Although our university system maintains graduation rates that are well above the national average, both policymakers and higher education leaders have grown increasingly concerned about student time-to-degree and the potential impact on [graduation rates](#) and overall student success.

UNC has identified a number of factors that contribute to this **growing trend of increased time-to-degree** including: family and employment obligations which cause a student to leave school temporarily; transfers to other institutions; changes in major; enrolling in too few credit hours per semester; and performing poorly in classes.



As students take longer and longer to complete their degrees, the total cost of their education increases, which in turn has a significant influence on student loan debt.

In fact, the student debt of UNC graduates [increased more than 60 percent](#) between 2006 and 2014. **The burden of substantial student loan payments restricts the financial independence of both recent graduates and those who fail to finish their degrees.**

How Does the Degree Completion Plan Work?

The Undergraduate Degree Completion plan allows each institution to determine its own set of student success strategies **tailored to the needs of its unique student body and geographic setting.**

Each constituent institution must:

- **Identify a subgroup of students** who can make gains in educational attainment by reducing time-to-degree (with the possible additional benefit of reducing student debt);
- Implement a **set of student success strategies or interventions** (including, but not limited to, financial literacy programs, intrusive advising programs, and curriculum and scheduling planning tools);
- **Monitor the progress and effectiveness** of student success interventions and report to the system office on one-, three- and five-year cycles;
- Modify the student success strategies based on an **evidence-based evaluation**; and
- **Expand** student success interventions to additional subgroups of students.

We have highlighted the proposed interventions of one university below—for more information on the specific plans of other institutions, click [here](#).

Spotlight on Fayetteville State University

*Fayetteville State University will implement a series of **student success strategies** with four **targeted student subgroups**, each of whom have the potential for increased educational success.*

Student Success Strategies:

- **LEAP Summer Bridge Program** - Academic coursework to be completed prior to freshman year.
- **Freshman Interest Groups** - Learning communities comprised of students with the same major.
- **University Studies** - Semester-long student success course on career and degree planning.
- **Bronco Connect** - Early alert advising and intervention system.
- **High Impact Instructional Practices** - To be employed by all faculty and teaching staff.
- **Retention Awards** - Offered to students to minimize indebtedness.
- **Money Matters** - Financial literacy program.

Targeted Subgroups of Students:

- **First-time, full-time males**
- **Pell Grant recipients**
- **NC Community College transfers**
- **STEM majors**